

REMARKS

Reconsideration is requested for claims 13-26.

The drawings were objected to. The specification has been amended to clarify that the an embodiment of the snap catch is a spring. It is submitted that the amendment overcomes the objection to the drawings and withdrawal of the objection is cordially urged.

The disclosure was objected to. The specification has been amended to address the grounds for objection.

Claims 13-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,364,076 to *Nicholls* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,974,842 to *Schlack et al.* Claim 13, from which claims 14-22 depend, as amended, defines a system for screening off an area, comprising a partition element substantially covering a space between two upstanding carrier elements, the partition element being catchable in the carrier elements in an unstable preparatory position in which preparatory position the partition element is unable to remain unaided, and from which preparatory position the partition element is movable to a fixedly locked position relative to the carrier elements, wherein the partition element includes locking means, each locking means comprising a guide section for interlocking engagement with a recess in a respective carrier element of the carrier elements, and each locking means comprising a snap catch for retaining the guide section relative to the carrier element and the partition element in the fixedly locked position relative to the carrier elements, the snap catch being depressable during insertion of the guide section in the recess and the snap catch being retractable in the locking means by a specially adapted tool, and the snap catch being retractable by an excenter with a vane on rotating the excenter.

The claimed system facilitates performing the mounting and dismounting of a partition relative to carrier elements with a minimal number of components.

The applied patents, *Nicholls* and *Schlack et al.*, do not disclose the features or combination of features recited in claim 13. For example, neither patent discloses a combination of features including locking means comprising a snap catch for retaining the guide section relative to the carrier element and the partition element in the fixedly locked position relative to the carrier elements, the snap catch being depressable during insertion of the guide section in the recess and the snap catch being retractable in the locking means by a specially adapted tool, and the snap catch being retractable by an excenter with a vane on rotating the excenter.

In view of the differences between claim 13 and *Nicholls* in view of *Schlack et al.*, and further in view of the advantages available through the claimed system, it is respectfully submitted that claim 13 and the claims dependent therefrom define patentably over the applied patents.

Claim 23, from which claims 24-26 depend, defines, as amended, a method for mounting a partition element on two upstanding carrier elements, comprising hooking the partition element in the carrier elements in a temporary, unstable preparatory position, moving the partition element to a stable, mounted position relative to the carrier elements, locking the partition element in the mounted position by depressing a snap catch on each side of the partition element while moving the partition element to the mounted position so that the snap catch springs out into a locking position for fixedly locking the partition element relative to the carrier elements when in the mounted position, and retracting each snap catch by operating an actuator element to permit removal of the partition element from the carrier elements.

The method offers advantages including permitting mounting a partition element on carrier elements using a minimal number of components.

The applied patents, *Nicholls* and *Schlack et al.*, do not disclose the steps or combination of steps recited in claim 23. For example, neither patent discloses a combination of steps including locking the partition element in the mounted position by depressing a snap catch on each side of the partition element while moving the partition element to the mounted position so that the snap catch springs out into a locking position for fixedly locking the partition element relative to the carrier elements when in the mounted position, and retracting each snap catch by operating an actuator element to permit removal of the partition element from the carrier elements.

In view of the differences between claim 23 and *Nicholls* in view of *Schlack et al.*, and further in view of the advantages available through the claimed method, it is respectfully submitted that claim 23 and the claims dependent therefrom define patentably over the applied patents.

To the extent that the applicant does not respond to a particular comment in the Official Action, the applicant does not intend by this to indicate acquiescence in or agreement with the comment. To the extent that any extensions of time are necessary in connection with this application it is requested that there be a standing petition for extension of time and that any additional fees that are required, or refunds due, in connection with this or any other paper filed in connection with this application be charged to Deposit Account 503015.

If the Examiner should be of the opinion that a telephone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned.

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Respectfully submitted,

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